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ABSTRACT

Addressed to teachers, administrators, and researchers, this study discusses the philosophy behind collaborative school-based curriculum development and the results of an attempt to implement this type of curriculum development. This multi-disciplinary approach offers a way to combine the advantages of both centralized and localized decision making by bringing together the teacher's classroom expertise and the researcher's knowledge of theory and research methods. In this approach, the curriculum is planned and developed by, in, and for local schools, but the centralized agency provides resources, coordination between schools, supervision, leadership, and expertise. At different stages in the process the agency and the school have different levels of involvement, but shared responsibility exists at all times. The case study focuses on the attempt to develop a curriculum for Orthodox Jewish day schools that would encourage compassion among students. While difficulties developed, particularly in establishing trust and constructive working relationships among participants from differing backgrounds, positive results outweighed the difficulties encountered. This approach is recommended for future projects even though the case study is not yet complete. (IS)

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COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:

A CASE STUDY

by

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Collaborative School-Based Curriculum Development is a rather new approach to the process of curriculum development that is anchored in two recent trends in the curriculum field, specifically Collaborative Research and School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD). This approach offers a way to combine the benefits of centralized curriculum development (i.e, agency-based) with those performed on a local basis for specific needs (i.e., school-based) by means of collaboration between a central educational agency and the schools it serves. Collaborative SBCD seeks not only to retain the merits of the centralized as well as the school-based strategies, but also to avoid the problems and limit the difficulties inherent in the operationalization of each of these strategies.

Before this approach is illustrated through a specific example, I will describe how it combines elements from Collaborative Research and SBCD. After the broader theoretical context is discussed, the case will be studied from my own idiosyncratic view as the curriculum specialist of the project. (It should be noted, by the way, that this particular project represents only one instance of my agency's policy of engaging in real collaboration with schools in the area of curriculum development.)

At present, of the three major stages in the curriculum development process - designing a paradigm/platform for the curriculum, planning for teaching and learning, and adaptation - only the first stage has been completed. The second stage is currently being initiated and will probably continue for several years. This paper focuses mainly on the completed stage, but illuminates some of the characteristics and procedures of the present stage, as well as the future stage of adaptation. The paper concludes

with an analysis and evaluation of Collaborative SBCD, emphasizing the merits of collaboration and thereby comparing it with "purer" SBCD.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND COLLABORATIVE SBCD

Collaborative Research views the collaboration among researchers and practitioners as a process of shared expertise, with the teacher as the expert on classroom and the researcher as an expert on theory and research methods. Working together throughout all the research stages implies that the research questions are probably relevant to the practitioners, that the setting studied is examined intensively, and that the study incorporates two perspectives rather than one and is therefore richer (Kyle and McCutcheon, 1984).

Kyle and McCutcheon claim that "collaborating in research implies more than only cooperation between the researcher and the teacher; it implies co-investigation...(but) collaboration does not necessarily imply that each has the same responsibilities, nor does it imply that patterns of collaboration must be the same in all studies" (pp. 174-5). In examining the process of Collaborative Research, Kyle and McCutcheon identify the following major stages:

1. Initiation of the project and the generation of ideas is shared by the researcher and the teacher.

2. Through discussions, both co-investigators develop the questions to guide their inquiry.

3. The teacher together with the researcher decides about allocating responsibility for gathering the evidence and how to interpret and write up the results.

4. Dissemination of the results is performed in a way acceptable by the researcher and the teacher.

By way of analogy, Collaborative Research provides the general methodological framework for Collaborative SBCD. By substituting "research" for "development," "researcher" for "curriculum expert," and "co-researcher teacher" for "co-developer practitioner," the notion of Collaborative Research can be applied to the process of curriculum development in the following way:

1. Initiation of the project and generation of ideas is shared by the curriculum expert and the practitioner.

2. Through negotiations, both co-developers arrive at a curriculum platform for the project.

3. The practioner and the curriculum expert engage in a shared process of developing, testing and evaluating the materials.

4. Curriculum diffusion and implementation is carried out in a way acceptable to the practitioner and the curriculum expert.

Certainly, collaborative curriculum development requires effective interpersonal and communication skills between the curriculum expert and the practitioner. Indeed, selection of reflective and articulate practitioners as co-developers necessarily affect the process and the product of development, thereby providing a slanted view of teaching and possibilities for curriculum implementation. Also, identifying motivated and committed practitioners to be co-developers and providing release time for their participation might require altering administrative policies and readjusting established views of the school environment. These potential negative aspects, however, should not be overshadowed by the possible benefits to be gained from a collaborative procedure. First, its ability to focus on practical needs as experienced and defined by practitioners could produce useful curriculum materials that would

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eventually improve practice. Second, collaborative curriculum development leads teachers to be more active thinkers, writers and communicators on educational problems and thereby offers a new dimension to teacher professionalism. Third, it provides opportunities to develop and test theory and to demonstrate the interrelationships between curriculum theory and practice.

SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATIVE SBCD

The failure of external centralized bodies to develop curricula on their own and to have them appropriately implemented has been responsible for the rise of a new genre of curriculum development activities which are school-based. Short's (1983) matrix for identifying curriculum development strategies differentiates clearly between the centralized and the school-based strategies. (See Figure 1)

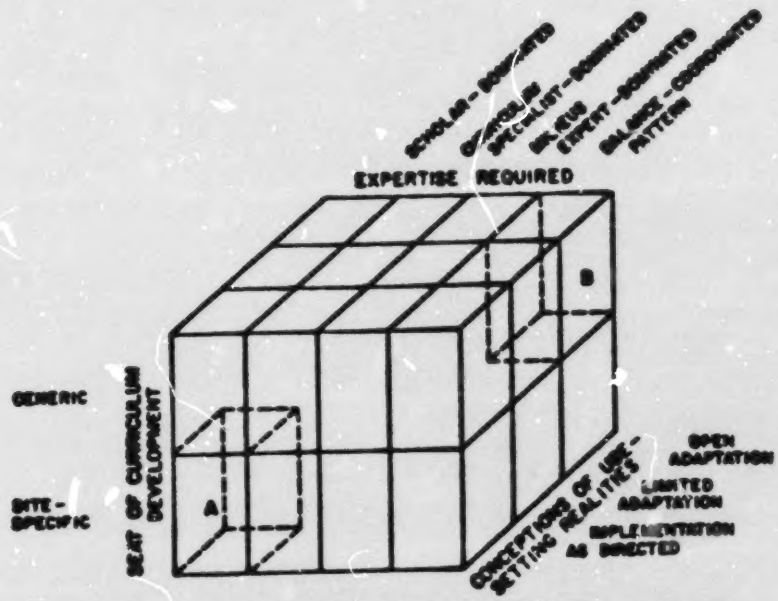

FIGURE 1/Matrix for identifying curriculum development strategies.

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In this typology, Short creates a three-dimensional structure to categorize many curriculum development strategies. While his "generic" and "site-specific" categories involve juristical aspects, they nevertheless correspond strongly to the "externally-based" and "user-based" styles. In a sense (although oversimplified), we can say that the upper half of the cube represents the centralized strategies and the lower half of the cube represents the school-based strategies. If one would look at the dimension of "seat of curriculum development" as continuous rather than discrete, Collaborative SBCD would probably fall somewhere between the "generic" and "site-specific," although closer to the latter. This combination does not fall neatly within any of the two categories and is rather unusual in the realm of practice of curriculum development.

Short's typology also helps us realize that the categorization of a development strategy is not uni-dimensional. Hence, within both the generic and site-specific forms, there are variations depending on the required expertise for conducting curriculum development and on the realities of teaching and learning that exist in the actual setting for which the curriculum under development is intended. The most common combinations of the school-based category are the balance-coordinated/open-adaptation (e.g., Reid and Walker, 1975; CERI, 1979; Klein, Tye and Wright, 1979; Connelly and Elbaz, 1980), and the curriculum specialist-dominated/limited-adaptation (e.g., Ben-Peretz, 1977; Sabar and Shafrir, 1980, 1982). The Collaborative SBCD described in this paper is of the balance-coordinated/open-adaptation type.

In these two dimensions of "required expertise" and "use-setting realities," Collaborative SBCD coincides with many other cases of SBCD and is therefore not unique. However, being partly generic/partly site-specific introduces variables and components unfamiliar to either the generic or the site-specific patterns. (One should note that the three dimensions of the matrix are interrelated and therefore variations in one of them, such as the seat of curriculum development, results in qualitative changes in the whole combination.) What follows is an examination of Collaborative SBCD in relation to the more common attributes of expertise (i.e., "balance-coordinated") and use-setting (i.e., "open adaptation") and to the less common attribute of seat (i.e., "partly generic/partly site-specific").

The Expertise Attribute in SBCD

Collaborative SBCD clearly has a balance-coordinated pattern of participation, where no singular participant dominates the process of curriculum development. The mix of participants usually conforms to the following kinds of expertise (Schwab, 1978):

(a A project director who is knowledgeable in the political, social and cultural milieux in which Jewish education takes place. The director coordinates the project from an administrative, as well as an educational, perspective and provides leadership to the whole project. This is an obvious divergence from the major role often ascribed to the coordinator as the curriculum specialist (Sabar, Silberstein and Shafriri, 1982).

(b) Persons familiar with teachers and teaching practices, such as teachers, principals and teacher-center staff. The conception of SBCD as teacher-oriented (Connelly, 1972; Prestt, 1979; Connelly and Ben-Peretz, 1980; Sabar and Shafriri, 1982) has been criticized on the grounds that teachers might not be adequately trained to prepare quality learning materials (Sabar, n.d.) or even to evaluate the learning materials they use (Ariav, 1983). Although SBCD is an empty concept without teacher participation, it is our conviction that additional types of practitioners should be included in the process.

In many cases, principals and administrators exclude curriculum work from their leadership role (De Bevoise, 1984), but their contribution to the process of development (Goodlad, 1980) and implementation-adaptation (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977) is crucial. We recognize the importance of partnership between principals and teachers in the process of curriculum development. Moreover, experienced staff from our Teachers' Centers participate in this process and provide a rich perspective on different school practices, teachers' thinking, relevance of ideas and feasibility of application.

Since the practitioners who participate in our curriculum development projects are, at the time of participation, in fact working in a school, they provide an accurate picture

of some school practices and they can easily be developers/users. Although participants are paid for their work on a project, their motivation for doing it must be intrinsic and not external because the payment itself cannot attract teachers and principals who are not genuinely interested in getting involved with the prolonged and complex endavor of curriculum development. For this group of practitioners, we see the collaboration in curriculum development as a learning experience which should ultimately result in increased awareness of curricular issues and in improved practice regardless of the type of materials they design and develop.

(c) Subject matter scholars, such as media experts for a media-based curriculum and rabbis for a holiday curriculum. It is a prerequisite for a participating subject-matter scholar to be versed in the field in order that his/her expertise is not detached from the realm of practice (i.e., the "ivory tower" phenomenon).

(d) An expert on the educational potential of students, such as a psychologist. Such a professional is consulted, depending upon the content area of the developed curriculum and the age level of the students for whom it is developed.

(e) A specialist with knowledge of the curriculum development process, to provide technical expertise and to serve as an integrator and synthesizer of that process. The curriculum specialist assists the project coordinator in keeping the curriculum development process on task, with purposeful

foresight and with awareness of the epistemological and axiological ramifications of the various decisions made by all parties throughout the process.

The Use-Setting Attribute in Collaborative SBCD

Collaborative SBCD is of an open-adaptation kind because we admit that the full potential of the curriculum lies in its heuristic value, not in its prescriptive value (Ben-Peretz, 1975), and therefore expect it to be used differently in different settings. In addition to being a generally favorable mode of curriculum implementation, open-adaptation appears to be the most suitable method for the heterogeneity of schools in and for which the curricula are developed. These private Jewish schools differ from each other in their religious ideology, curriculum structure (e.g., subject matters taught and the language used to teach them), format (day or supplementary schools), qualification of teachers and principals and composition of student population. Any curriculum project designed to be implemented as directed or with limited-adaptation in these schools is doomed to failure because of the diversified and decentralized nature of non-public education.

Quite interestingly, the majority of reported school-based innovations are coming from countries with centralized educational systems such as Israel, England and Sweden (e.g., Sabor, n.d.; Eggleston, 1980; Lindblad, 1984). Despite the centralized nature of these systems, the school-based efforts - almost by definition - require a conception of use-setting reality that is as close as possible to open-adaptation.

School-based innovations in less centralized educational systems, such as the U.S. (e.g., Eisner, 1979), are confined to public education which, despite variations, shares many more common elements than private education. If school-based efforts in public education seek to approach open-adaptation, it is only natural to expect the heterogeneous educational system of private schools to adopt this mode of implementation.

The Seat Attribute in Collaborative SBCD

In this dimension, Collaborative SBCD is substantially different from both "typical" SBCD and common centralized strategies. It is a hybrid form which is partly generic and partly site-specific, with an emphasis on the latter. The curriculum is planned and developed by, in, and for local schools, thereby making the developers also the users. In this sense it is an SBCD strategy. The diversity of schools and the broad scope of the developed curriculum require coordination, supervision, and leadership that only a central agency, which has the necessary resources and expertise, can provide. The centralized nature of the SBCD strategy is expressed in the administrative and professional support that the agency contributes. The agency's role is more significant in the early stages of development when principals and teachers - who have no previous experience in curriculum development - seek constant guidance and leadership. As they become more secure and experienced in this enterprise, the agency's role becomes smaller and the school-based nature of the process deepens, as is illustrated on the next page.

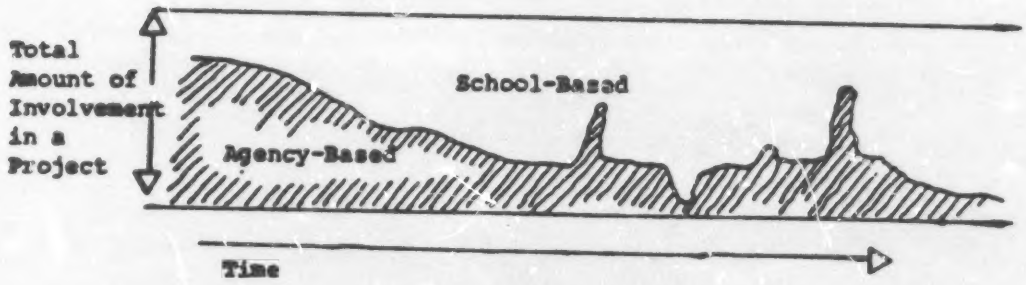

Figure 2: The Distribution of Involvement in the Project Over Time

Although the partnership is not evenly divided throughout all stages of the process (because each stage requires different types of input and expertise), it nevertheless reflects the principles of collaborative procedures: there are shared responsibilities at each stage, both partners participate in the decision-making process, and every participant takes some part in the execution of the project. This form of collaboration between local schools and a service agency facilitates a development process which is, in essence, school-based but enjoys, at the same time, the benefits of a generic process.

Collaborative SBCD has the potential to include the benefits as well as the drawbacks of each of these individual strategies. It recognizes the key role that practitioners play in development and implementation and is responsive to local circumstances. At the same time, it admits that, on their own, teachers cannot develop curricula of a large scale because they lack the required knowledge, skills, understanding,

resources and motivation. A central agency, on the other hand, has the professional and managerial capability to develop a large-scale curriculum but is remote from the classroom.

The deficiencies of this collaborative model are also a reflection of limitations specific to each of the two basic strategies. Like most SBCD efforts, the project progresses slowly and its participants find it difficult to sustain the necessary level of involvement through completion. Similar to other agency-based efforts, it faces restrictions and criticism from the funding source and the agency might find itself in control of, rather than in partnership with, schools.

THE ETZ CHAIM CURRICULUM PROJECT

The case of the Etz Chaim Curriculum Project is an example of how Collaborative SBCD works. It is described historically from the time of initiation to the present. The description centers on stages within the process and obstacles, problems and phenomena which could serve to teach important lessons to those involved in similar collaborative projects.

Getting Started

The Yeshiva Etz Chaim Foundation initiated the Etz Chaim Curriculum Project in Summer 1983 by assigning the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJE) a mandate to develop a curriculum for New York Orthodox day schools (yeshivot). Unlike common practice, the grant was not given in response to a proposal submitted by BJE but, rather, was to be used to create a proposal for the development

of the curriculum. Contingent upon this proposal, the Foundation needed to decide if the grant would be further extended past the first year of the project (out of ten planned) in order to develop the curriculum itself. This unusual situation, in which neither the subject area/content nor the grade levels had been previously defined, played an important role in the first stage of the project,

The Foundation proposed a rather broad and general aim for the project: "To help develop a new kind of Jew in America who has instinctive Jewish reactions of mercy and compassion to all - who is prepared to accept and include all Jews with love and sensitivity without regard to religious ideology, economic and social station in life or family situation." Further negotiations between the Foundation representatives and BJE's administrative and professional staff helped the former realize that any curriculum developed could only make a small contribution toward achieving this goal, and assisted the latter in understanding the educational philosophy of the Foundation. Our first task was then to design a proposal for the curriculum to be developed that would reflect this philosophy and, at the same time, meet the current needs of Jewish schools.

In the fall of that year, BJE established a core team to develop the proposal. This team was carefully selected to include six creative and experienced teachers and principals who represent the curricular needs and the typical profile of many local yeshivot. Three schools, each represented by its principal and one teacher, joined forces with a group of four professionals from BJE: the project director; the director of our Teachers' Centers; an Orthodox rabbi who is both an

expert in Judaica and is familiar with day school practices; and a curriculum specialist.

The agency staff set a general and tentative agenda for the first few meetings of the core team. For example, areas of inquiry for these meetings were:

(1) to define the scope of the curriculum in terms of content areas and grade levels

(2) to suggest possible formats which the curriculum materials could take

(3) to design an overall plan for the curriculum (i.e., a scope and sequence structure)

(4) to propose a collaborative working structure for the development process between BJE and the local schools

In the first meeting, the project director presented the Foundation's goal for the project, elaborated on the Foundation's educational philosophy, and presented the four general areas for discussion. Hence, the agency assumed a leadership role from the beginning. The first meeting was confusing because each participant of the core team had a different practical interpretation of the general goal proposed by the Yeshiva Ktz Chaim Foundation. The wide range of interpretations was not only due to obvious differences in personal tastes and values, but was also a reflection of the team's basic heterogeneity. Ideas and suggestions were as limited as a unit on theme x for grade y and as global and overwhelming as a comprehensive program for grades 1-8 on a particular subject. Heated discussion on whether the curriculum should be in English

or Hebrew threatened to undermine the meeting and was thus left undecided until later. Consideration of possible curriculum formats - such as literature anthologies or slide sets and music on a specific subject - were mixed together with personal anecdotes and examples of school practices. Often people did not listen to what their colleagues were saying, and a good many ideas got lost in the discussion. Sometimes an idea was cut short for technical or logistical reasons without being fully examined. People were tense, anxious to get a quick and neat solution, impatient with "abstract" discussions, and self-centered. On the other hand, the enthusiasm for the project was obvious, as one principal said: "I want this curriculum to be of quality, to serve as a model curriculum for other projects." The discussion in this meeting was not dominated by any one participant, except for the director who had to reject some financially unfeasible suggestions that were made. The first meeting closed with a vague consensus about the content area and grade levels for which the curriculum will be developed(i.e., area #1 above).

Already in the first meeting it became apparent that the process would be longer and rougher than anticipated for three reasons: First, the points of view of the various participants differed in many respects. Variations in religious ideology, educational philosophy, curricular awareness and educational professionalism seemed, at first, detrimental to a smooth process. While in SBCD and in generic strategies teams are homogeneous, in Collaborative SBCD the heterogeneity is both beneficial and problematic. We deliberately did not feel that preparing the core team for the project (through a series of workshops on curriculum

development would be constructive. Preparation might impose certain approaches, channel people to one direction, and institutionalize the process. We decided, rather, to start with the participants where they were at and have the group reach a common ground through experience.

Second, teamwork depends largely upon team members admitting their mistakes, "ignoring" their egos, being responsive to others, and cooperating with their colleagues on a long-term basis. The process of achieving an efficient, functional group is always complex and is especially so when the team is not used to working together and is so heterogeneous. The core team of the project had a long way to go before reaching that stage of effective teamwork.

Finally, shared partnership in a democratic and open-ended process, as was proposed by the agency, was a threatening situation and unfamiliar for the teachers and principals on the team. These practitioners did not know at first how to relate to this new status and tried to put the responsibility of policy-making on the groups's representatives from BJE. This caused a "we-they" perception on the part of each of the subgroups, causing suspicion and a lot of mutual testing. Realizing that their input was important and was taken into consideration constantly, the teachers and principals gradually developed a rapport with the rest of the team and with each other and were able, after several months, to fully appreciate the true partnership.

The next few meetings followed the basic patterns established in the first meeting. Deliberations corresponding to the four areas that needed clarification (#1-4 above) produced some commonalities, and the difficulty in dealing with "a mess" was slowly reduced. Every meeting was tape-recorded and the minutes - briefly summarized by agency staff - were distributed to all participants before the next session for reflection and critiquing. The meeting often opened with the participants' reactions to these summaries, and this led to unanticipated avenues of discussion. Very little pressure was exercised by anyone to eliminate "unnecessary" talk or to mainstream the discussion around certain issues.

One teacher felt that the kind of involvement required from her - namely, a three-hour bi-weekly meeting plus home preparation for the next meeting - was too intensive, and she dropped out. The remaining female teachers, however, overshadowed by their male principals, slowly developed a sense of independence and freedom from their subordinated teacher status and became active team members able to express themselves freely.

Two months after our work began, the core team was able to submit to the Foundation a very brief and basic proposal for the curriculum to be developed. For instance, regarding the first area to be clarified (#1 above), a general consensus concluded that the curriculum should be interdisciplinary and focus on the holidays between Passover and the end of the school year as a time framework for organization. A few major underlying values were identified and a decision was made to develop the curriculum for grades 1 through 8. One could expect that

type of basic consensus to emerge sooner than it did. The slowness of the process, though, was outweighed by the imporant effects it had on the group. In a way, the slow process eliminated some of the polarization between the agency staff and the practitioners, erased some of the differences of opinion and approach, and created a sense of a group and a commitment to the project. In a more homogeneous setting, where the majority of the participants are teachers or agency professionals, this stage would probably be much shorter.

Agency staff wrote the brief proposal (which was scrutinized by the whole team), submitted it to and negotiated it with the Foundation, and brought the results back to the core team.

Developing the Curriculum Plan

Once the Yeshiva Etz Chaim Foundation approved the proposal, the core team faced a new task: to translate the proposal into a curriculum plan, detailed to the extent that additional schools could join and help execute it (e.g., develop the actual materials). Specifically, the agency staff suggested elaborating on the proposed scope and sequence grid in rounds, adding more depth and width each time.

Surprisingly, this phase was not easier or shorter than the previous one. Although working patterns had already been established and all parties' commitment to the project was high, new problems emerged. One such problem was the principals' urgent need for quick results and their impatience with the long and tedious rounds of discussion. A few participants did not see any point in this circular process until

they realized that it resulted in qualitative changes in the grid. It was the belief of agency staff that there are no shortcuts in the process and, knowing that a well thought out plan is a necessary condition for developing a good curriculum, we forced the team, to a certain extent, to reexamine each issue a few times.

Another difficulty was the tendency to forget the conceptual level in which we worked and, instead, to talk about particular classroom activities. Lack of knowledge and understanding of curricular issues prematurely gravitated many discussions to a lower level in which ideas were stripped to bare facts and the abstract was transformed to the concrete. The BJE staff on the team worked hard to reverse these regressions and to keep the discussion focused and on the appropriate level.

At times the positive elements of our work were overshadowed by the difficulties and disguised by the frustrations. But reflection enabled me to observe a few interesting phenomena.

First, the impact of the school-based nature of our project was apparent. The input provided by the principals and teachers in terms of needs, feasibility, appropriateness, and relevance of concepts, ideas and approaches was crucial in every step of the work. For example, when one of the agency staff suggested keeping the curriculum structure unified and introducing Holocaust Remembrance Day in the primary grades, most of the practitioners rejected the notion on pedagogical and practical grounds. Second, BJE staff were helpful in providing theoretical perspectives, research-based knowledge and practical techniques.

For instance, at one point the teachers and principals felt that they exhausted their creative ability to identify different activites with potential for classroom use. Agency staff then presented them with a list of over 150 possibilities, and this helped inspire the team with more creative avenues of thinking. In another instance, agency staff synthesized a whole series of deliberations, thereby helping the other team members to conceptualize the work. Finally, the practitioners felt at ease with BJE's control over budget and negotiations with the Foundation. They had no administrative or organizational responsibilities and could pay full attention to educational matters.

Ultimately, this process taught us all what it takes to design a conceptual curriculum platform through a collaborative process. At the end of this stage we all felt a great sense of accomplishment, satisfaction and partnership. In a way, it was an educational experience for <u>all</u> members of the team, and this professional growth was reflected in the group's commitment to continue working together in the project's next stage, in willingness to collaborate on other projects, and in the informal network of relationships that emerged among team members.

At the end of this phase a proposal was written which summarized our deliberative process in a very detailed fashion. The proposal was, again, written by the agency professionals under the scrutiny of the whole team. At this point the complete and comprehensive platform of the curriculum is being evaluated by the Foundation for the purpose of recommending what specific materials should be developed first.

Planning for the Next Stages

We are now in the process of identifying additional schools to join the core team in the actual development of the curriculum materials. We will form small teams of teachers and principals to translate the curriculum plan into actual materials, making sure that at least one member of the core team participates in each group. Before the work begins, we will all meet a few times to ensure that all participants fully understand their tasks. Also, periodic meetings for the whole project will be scheduled as the process unfolds. BJE's professional staff will provide constant administrative, curricular and academic assistance to all teams and will secure any needed expertise to support these teams. The materials developed by a team will be tested by the teachers on that team in their own classrooms and modified accordingly. Each final version of the materials will be evaluated by all members of the project for soundness, clarity, creativity, correlation with other materials in the project and appeal to teachers and students.

The perception of curriculum adaptation as an integral part of the development process implies that: (1) schools that are involved in the development will slowly integrate the already developed materials within their existing curricula, making the developers the users; and (2) these schools will serve as the bases for diffusion of the curriculum to those who wish to adapt it. Teachers from other schools will be able to visit these participating schools to observe the new curriculum "in action." Moreover, the developers/users will give workshops for novice teachers interested in adopting the curriculum and will provide them with ongoing assistance.

The "open adaptation" nature of the curriculum will help to diffuse it (or parts of it) in schools where the staff will see its potential to improve their educational environment.

It is important to note that the planning for the next stages was an important product of the process we went through. In fact, the basic outline for this plan was proposed by the agency staff in one of the first meetings but the group was not ready to deal with it at that time. It was later discussed several times in different contexts and then explicitly examined at the end of platform development. Therefore, in spite of the important role that the agency played in creating this collaborational policy, it is nevertheless a product of the whole team's work.

ASSESSMENT OF COLLABORATIVE SBCD

The experience accumulated using Collaborative SBCD is relatively limited as we are still in the early stages of our various curriculum projects, one of which is the Etz Chaim Project. This curriculum development strategy, however, looks promising and desirable at least in designing a curriculum plan and in making policy decisions in the education system in which the agency works.

The strategy is synergetic. Neither our agency alone nor the participating schools on their own could have achieved what we achieved together. While an agency has the professional expertise, resources and potential for running an efficient project, it is remote from the field. On the other hand, teachers and principals, who have the insight into classroom practice - which is so crucial for developing an adaptable curriculum - lack the curricular expertise, resources and managerial organization. Hence, the

agency and the school indeed complement each other and compensate for each other's deficiencies; together, through collaboration, they create a powerful structure for curriculum development.

Some expected general advantages of SBCD have actually been observed in our Collaborative SBCD strategy. These included early insight from users into the process of curriculum development, actual impact of developers/users in every stage of the process, intertwined development and implementation, and the participants' professional growth. The collaborative nature of this strategy introduced advantages common to collaborative practices, such as consideration of multiple perspectives due to the team's diversity, grappling with issues meaningful and relevant to practitioners, and contribution to teacher professionalism. Nevertheless, the Collaborative SBCD strategy offered a few additional merits to those unique to either SBCD or Collaborative Research: (a) having a broader socio-political view of the user-setting as a result of agency-wide experience with many schools; (b) continuous provision of professional expertise to the developers/users; (c) efficient management of project resources; and (d) relieving practitioners from administrative burdens.

The expected major disadvantages of SBCD are generally the length of the process, the lack of adequate professional expertise (e.g., in curriculum development, academic subjects and psychology), and project management difficulties. The experience so far confirms expectations with regard to the first point but fails to confirm the other two. Of the three problems which Collaborative Research often raises, only two materialized in our strategy: First, it was not easy to identify motivated and

committed practitioners to be our co-developers; and second, communication difficulties (due to the group's heterogeneity) prolonged and complicated the process. The third disadvantage, selection of articulate and reflective practitioners which results in a slanted view of teaching, is irrelevant in the case of SBCD in an open-adaptation mode. This problem, however, is crucial in collaborative research and in curriculum development practices which adapt the "implementation as directed" mode. On the other hand, Collaborative SBCD introduced one unanticipated problem, namely, the difficulty in achieving contructive working patterns, so that rapport and trust are established between agency people and school people and all members learn to work cooperatively.

This balance of merits and drawbacks indicates that while Collaborative SBCD enjoys the benefits expected of "typical" SBCD and of Collaborative Research, it does not include all the problems inherent to each. Moreover, the combination yields more positive aspects to the process of curriculum development than negative ones. This implies that, at least for a context similar to the one described in this paper, Collaborative SBCD is a viable strategy and has proven to have an immediate qualitative impact. While it is too early to examine the full potential of this approach, it is nevertheless emerging as a promising SBCD strategy for those who do not believe in generic strategies but realize the wide scope of implications of "pure" SBCD.

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